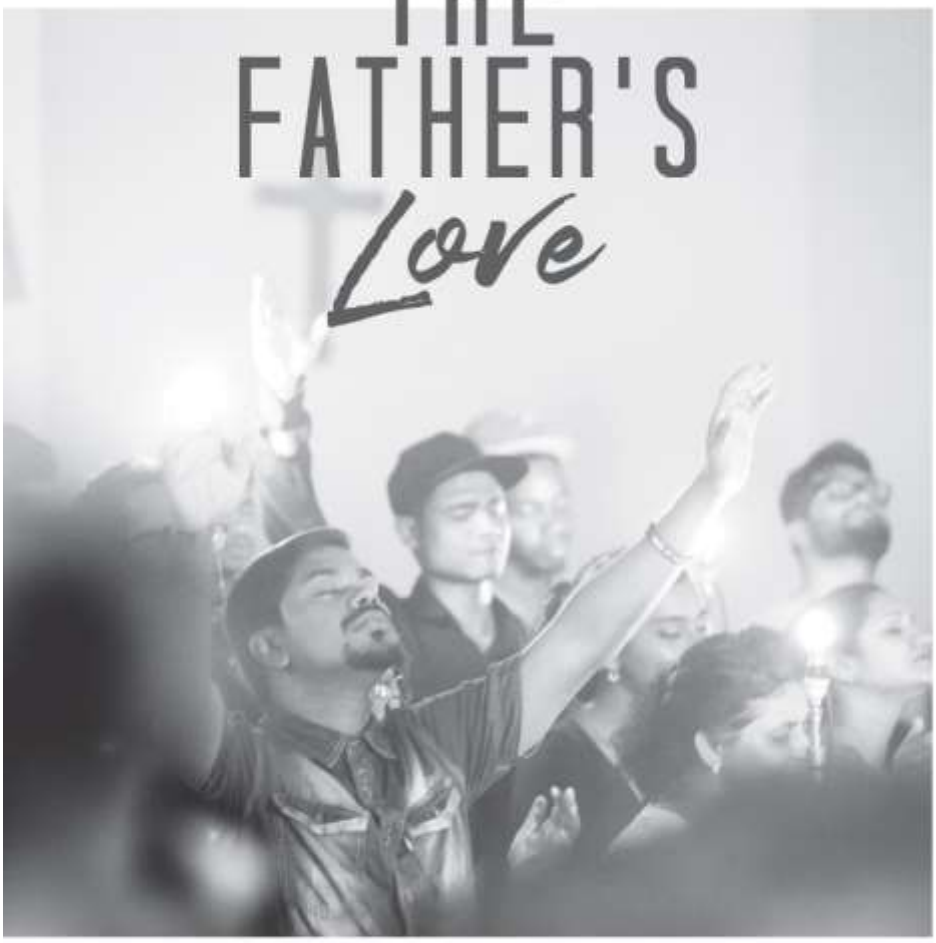
THE FATHER'S *Love*



ASHISH RAICHUR

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THE FATHER'S *Love*

Untiring Love

APC MUSIC **(apcmusic.org)**

When mountains loom before my path
And its shadows cover me
I wonder who will hear my cry
Help me reach my destiny

Pre-chorus 1

Then I lift my eyes
To see You, God Maker of the earth and heav'n above
I know that my help Comes from You, Lord Surrounded (x2)

Chorus

By Your love
Your untiring love
Day and night,
You watch from above
You will not let me stumble
You won't let me fall
Father of untiring love

Verse 2

When I'm in the bright of day
Or in the darkness of the night
I'm covered underneath Your wings
You will never leave my side

Pre-chorus 2

So I fix my eyes On You, my God
Maker of the earth and heav'n above
know that my help Comes from You,
Lord Surrounded (x2)

Bridge

Surrounded, surrounded, surrounded by Your love (x4)

Better Than Life

APC MUSIC **(apcmusic.org)**

Verse 1

O God, we long and thirst for
You In a dry and dusty land,
You're our refuge
O God, we hunger for Your truth
When strength fails
our soul cries out to You

Chorus

For Your love is so much better than life
In You Lord, our needs are satisfied
So our lips begin to praise
As we lift our hands and pray
Your love is so much better than life

Verse 2

In worship, we see Your glorious face
We're standing here, speechless and amazed
And forever Lord, we will bless Your name
Cast away our fears, saved by Your matchless grace

Bridge

O God, You are my God
Nothing compares
To Your steadfast love

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INTRODUCTION

Your revelation of God affects your relationship with God. Your relationship with God also affects your relationship with others.

The Bible unveils many facets of God. Of these, one of the most powerful revelations of God is that of a Father. God is our heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus taught us to call God "Our Father." The Bible reveals the Father's love for us. This book is a study on the Father's love. Our understanding of God's love for us affects how we love God, how we love ourselves, and how we love others.

The first commandment is to love God with all we have. The second is to love others as we love ourselves. We love Him because He first loved us. Our love for God deepens as we understand how much He has loved us. As we understand how much He loved us, we learn to love ourselves. When we love ourselves, we can love others as well. When we understand how much God values us, we begin to value ourselves. When we value ourselves, we can value others as well.

Typically, we relate to others in the same way as we relate to ourselves. If we are critical of ourselves, condemning of ourselves, we tend to do that to others. Our understanding of God's love sets us free from negativity toward ourselves as well as toward others.

God, our Father in heaven, loves us unconditionally and immeasurably. The greatest expression and demonstration of the Father's love for us is the Cross of Jesus Christ. When we know, believe, receive, and rest in the Father's love for us, everything changes. We are healed, made whole and set free from all our brokenness and bondages. When we live out of the Father's love we love as we are loved. We love God freely. We love others freely. We live as more than conquerors, those who have more than vanquished all of life's challenges and the powers of darkness, through the unbreakable love of God.

This book leads us on a journey to personally know and experience the Father's Love. Get ready for one of the most exciting expeditions you have ever been on—a journey into the depths of the limitless love of God.

God Bless!
Ashish Raichur

1. Infinite God, Our Heavenly Father

Our Father In Heaven

Matthew 6:9
In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

The Bible unveils to us many facets of who God is. Of these, one of the most amazing aspects of God is that of a Father. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, calling God our "Father in heaven" or our "heavenly Father." The Lord Jesus used the words "heavenly Father" and "Father in heaven" to refer to God the Father, often.

To think that this infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present, self-existent, eternal God would desire to be our Father, is something awesome and wonderful. As Father, He has a family of sons and daughters, part of who are in heaven and others on earth. This family derives its name, that is, its identity, from Him. The Apostle Paul wrote: *"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"* (Ephesians 3:14).

God is self-existent and self-sufficient. God is not in need of people. And yet out of His own will and choosing, He decided to create people, whom He desired to be His very own "sons" and "daughters," so that He could be a Father to them.

He has chosen to put Himself in a posture where He as Father longs for us as sons and daughters. In this sense He "needs" us. He desires for us to know Him and enjoy Him as Father.

1 John 4:8
... God is Love …

The Bible also reveals to us that God is love. Our heavenly Father is love. As we will discover through the course of this study, God's love is unconditional. God's love is unlimited. His love is infinite. This is how God loves.

Often, when we think of the word "father" we tend to associate this with our experience of our own natural parents and how they treated us. Some of us may have had wonderful experiences with our parents/fathers and so take well to the word "father." On the other hand, there could be some of us for whom the word "father" could be revolting. Our experience with our natural parents/father could have been painful and hence we detest anything that triggers those thoughts and memories.

This book is about our heavenly Father who is way higher, superior, and different from any earthly father. God is not like a bad earthly father. So, don't look at God through the lens of an earthly father. Don't let the negative experiences you may have had with your natural parents/father keep you from coming to know and receiving from your heavenly Father. Our goal in this study is to know and experience our heavenly Father's love. This is life transforming. Don't let anything hold you back from discovering and experiencing the Father's love.

God Is Relational

John 17:24
Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Even before the foundation of the world, before anything was created, there was love in the Trinity. There was love in the Godhead. The Godhead was and is love because God is love. There was love between the Father, the Word, and the Spirit in the dateless past—eternity past.

This teaches us that God is relational. God loves and can be loved.

Mark 12:29-31
29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.
30 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' this is the first commandment.
31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

The first commandment presented to us by the Lord Jesus is to love God with all we have—heart, soul, mind, and strength. This implies that God can be loved. He receives our love. He enjoys our love for Him. Our love touches Him. He feels our love for Him. When we look up to Him and out of the genuineness of our heart we tell Him "Father, I love you," "Lord Jesus, I love you," "Holy Spirit, I love you"—He feels it.

We are created in His image. We are relational. We can love and be loved. We were created to love God and to love people. We were created to be loved—to receive love.

Part of our being relational and being born in families is that we are children and long for the love, affection, nurture, encouragement, and affirmation of a parent—a father or mother.

God Has Made Us The Focus Of His Unlimited, Unconditional Love

Ephesians 1:4-5
4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,
5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Ephesians 1:4-5 (Message Bible)
4 Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love.
5 Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!)

Even before God created this world, He determined that He would have people—those chosen in Christ—to be holy and without blame covered with His love. He decided that He would adopt them as sons and daughters into His own family, be a Father to them, and call them by His own name. This was according to the good pleasure of His will. This is what He was eager to do and wanted to do.

This reveals God's heart, desiring to have sons and daughters. God's desire is to have relationship and intimate fellowship with us as sons and daughters, with Him as our heavenly Father. This has been His heart's desire, even before the foundations of the world. This is the reason for our creation. God created us so that we could be His sons and daughters and we could be the focus of His unlimited, unconditional love.

There was love even before creation, and there was creation because of love.

Restoring Our Capacity To Be Loved

However, we are broken because of sin. Our capacity to be loved is broken. Our capacity to love others is broken.

Because our capacity to love and be loved is broken, we do many things unconsciously that become walls around our own emotional selves. We tell ourselves that we can live without love. We distance ourselves from people. We shut people out. We do not get too close to anyone. We emotionally isolate ourselves from others. When this carries over into marriage, we are unable to get emotionally close to our spouse. Emotional intimacy becomes a very difficult thing because we have our walls or defenses up. Then as a parent (father) we may give the best we can, in terms of material things, to our children, but we are unable to express the affection and the warmth of a loving parent (father). Our children grow up deprived of genuine unconditional love and affection.

The strange thing is that with our broken capacity to love and to be loved, we "bond" or "emotionally connect" with all the wrong things in life. We get emotionally attached to

our work, career, success, fame, reputation, applause, affirmation, attention, money, things, etc.

Wrong Postures Before A Loving God

We then try to relate to God out of our brokenness. However, there are wrong ideas and misconceptions we carry inside us, and these affect how we relate to God. We tend to relate to God out of these wrong thinking patterns. These misconceptions and wrong thinking patterns distort our revelation of God—who He really is. Our picture (perception, understanding) of God is marred, tainted, and incorrect. We are unable to accept, receive, and embrace the unlimited and unconditional love of God our heavenly Father. This hinders us in our relationship with God. We consider here a few of the wrong postures (misconceptions) that keep us from understanding God's unlimited and unconditional love.

The Prodigal

In this mindset or thought pattern people always see themselves as unworthy, unfit, never good enough for anyone, and surely not good enough to be loved by God. So, when they relate to God, it is very difficult for them to comprehend God as a loving and forgiving Father.

They always think like the prodigal son who went to his father saying, *"I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants"* (Luke 15:19).

While it is good and important to repent when we have done wrong, this is not the mindset in which God wants us to always remain. The father celebrated the son upon his return, clothing him with fine robes, putting a ring on his finger, and having a feast and wanted his son to be his son!

When we realize what our sins have caused, and how great this forgiveness is which we have received, we love Him unreservedly in return. The Lord Jesus said about the sinner woman who came to Him in tears: *"Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little"* (Luke 7:47). It is not necessarily the number of our sins or the magnitude of the sins we have committed, but the understanding of what our sins have caused and how much we have been forgiven that evokes the response of loving Him unreservedly, lavishly. Having been forgiven much, we must pour out our love toward our heavenly Father. That is what He deserves and desires.

The Slave

In this thought pattern, people always have a slave mentality. They feel they must earn everything, feel unfit for bigger things, feel disqualified for things, and so on. So when they relate to God, it is very difficult for them to comprehend God as Someone who adopts us as sons and daughters, qualifies us to enjoy an inheritance, calls us His heirs, and joint heirs with Christ.

However, the Bible teaches us clearly that God does not want us to behave like slaves:

Romans 8:15
For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Romans 8:15 (Contemporary English Version)
God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father.

Romans 8:15 (Good News Bible)
For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God's children, and by the Spirit's power we cry out to God, "Father! my Father!"

Galatians 4:4-7
4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"
7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The Orphan

Those who have this mindset feel fatherless, abandoned, never have been and never will be loved, never felt that they belonged, feel that no one really cares for them. So, when they relate to God, it is extremely difficult for them to comprehend God as a loving, caring Father.

Both the Scripture references quoted above, Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:4-7, reiterate that God desires for us to relate to Him as sons and daughters calling Him "Father." God does not want us to feel or live as "spiritual orphans," but as sons and daughters of His.

The Outcast

In this mindset people have a deep-seated sense of rejection, always standing far off, feel excluded, left out, outcast, and so on. So, when they relate to God, it is very difficult

for them to comprehend God as Someone who welcomes them into His presence, Someone who encourages them to come boldly and freely to Him.

Ephesians 2:12-13,18
12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

The Bible makes it clear to us that we have been brought near to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus we have free access into God's presence. We are not outcasts. We are welcome into His presence. We can come boldly to God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

The Proud Elder Brother/Sister

Those with this thought pattern have a sense of pride. They tend to think "I never felt loved, I don't need love." They take pride in what they do "I'm faithful, I do my work," etc. Everything is based on work and tasks. So, when they relate to God, it is very difficult for them to comprehend God as Someone who calls us to rest in His love, just enjoy Him, and know that He also enjoys us.

The proud elder brother in the story of the prodigal son, could not stand it, when he heard that his father was celebrating the return of the wayward son. He complained, pointing to his impeccable record of fulfilling all his duties as a good son. However, all that the father had was his. The goat, the feast, and good food were always there, yet the elder son never made an attempt to enjoy them. His relationship with his father and family was based purely on work, without any sense of enjoying relationship, family, and the privileges of being a son in the house.

Luke 15:29-30
29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.
30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

The incident of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) brings out a similar understanding. Martha was so focused on serving the Master, that she neglected enjoying His presence and receiving from the Master teaching. She complained about Mary who was seizing the moment to receive the Master's words and enjoy His presence at their home. This wrong posture often leads us to be judgmental and critical of others who enjoy His presence, often, like the Pharisees.

Mark 14:3-5
3 And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head.
4 But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted?
5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply.

The Wounded

These are people who have been hurt, perhaps more than once and hence carry pain and wounds inside. They will never let anyone love them and will never try to love anyone else. They are just afraid to, out of fear of being hurt again. Sometimes, they may even carry unforgiveness, hatred, and anger toward people, especially toward those who in anyway resemble those who have hurt them. So, when they relate to God, it is very difficult for them to comprehend God as Some One who loves people genuinely, without malice, and who will never do anything hurtful or harmful. They find it difficult to trust in the love of our heavenly Father.

But God declares His unfailing love for His people, despite their constant failures.

Jeremiah 31:3
The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

God wants us to know that His love is all surpassing, and nothing can separate us from His love.

The Self-Critical

The self-critical are those who are extremely critical of themselves and of others. "I am not good, never good enough for myself, for others, for God ..." is how they think. They therefore push themselves to perform and compete to find acceptance, recognition, etc. Sometimes this is motivated by fear, and people even end up controlling, manipulating others to get ahead. They may consequently have bitter roots of judgments (being critical) of themselves and others. So, when they relate to God it is very difficult for them to comprehend God as Some One who is abundant in grace because of His great love. They find it difficult to understand that God loves us as we are and gives us what we do not deserve, out of love. This does not compute for them!

Yet the Scriptures point us to a God who is rich in mercy and abounding in grace because of His great, immeasurable, and unconditional love for us:

Ephesians 2:4-5
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

What Is Stopping Us From Receiving God's Love?

Let's examine if we are holding on to any of these or other wrong postures (misconceptions about God), which actually prevent us from recognizing Him as a loving heavenly Father and receiving His unconditional and immeasurable love for us**.**

1. The prodigal: to the prodigal He says, "While you were still a sinner, I loved you."
2. The slave: to the slave He says, "Even before the foundation of the world I planned to have you as my son or daughter."
3. The orphan: to the orphan He says, "Even before I created you, even before you were born, I planned to adopt you into my family."
4. The outcast: to the outcast, He says, "I love you so much and want you so near me, I have brought you to sit right next to me."
5. The proud elder brother: to the proud elder brother, the self-righteous, He says, "Just receive my love, it is always there."
6. The wounded: to the wounded He says, "Others have hurt you, but I am too good to do you wrong, too gentle to harm you."
7. The self-critical: to the self-critical He says, "I love you because I am love. Don't condemn yourself because I am not condemning you."

Let us ask Him to heal us and restore our capacity to receive His unlimited and unconditional love and to be loved by Him.

God has made us the focus of His unlimited and unconditional love.

His love has brought us into being His sons and daughters. God is our Father. We are His.

1 John 3:1a
Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1a (Message Bible)
What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are ...

REFLECTION

1. Reflect on the truth about God being a relational God—there was love even before creation, and there was creation because of love.

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2. Review the seven wrong postures (misconceptions) that we could have, and how this affects how we relate to God.

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3. Do any of the seven wrong postures resonate with you (you identify with)? Take some time to pray and invite God to dislodge these and replace them with the truth of His Word, so that you can relate to God as your heavenly Father, freely.

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4. Write down your thoughts/feelings as you look at yourself as a son or daughter of God, someone who is the focus of His unlimited and unconditional love.

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5. Read the instances in the Gospels where the Lord Jesus used the words "heavenly Father" (Matthew 6:14,26,32; Matthew 15:13; Matthew 18:35; Luke 11:13) and "Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16,45,48; Matthew 6:1,9; Matthew 7:21; Matthew 12:50; Matthew 18:19; Mark 11:25-26). Ponder on the contexts and reflect on how you can relate to God as your heavenly Father in these day-to-day contexts of life.

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2. IMMEASURABLE LOVE

The Immeasurable Greatness Of His Love

Ephesians 3:17-19
17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—
19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:17-19 (Amplified Bible)
17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith. And may you, having been [deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love,
18 be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God's people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love];
19 and [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God's presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself].

As expressed in these verses through the Apostle Paul, God our heavenly Father desires for us to come to a place where we are deeply rooted (like a tree) and securely grounded (like a building with a strong foundation) in His immeasurable love for us.

In verses 18-19 above, the Apostle Paul is referring to a "comprehending" and "knowing" of the Father's love that is personal and experiential, not purely intellectual. The word "comprehend" in Greek literally means "to take eagerly, to seize, to possess, to apprehend, and know by personal experience." God our heavenly Father desires for us to practically know through personal experience the immeasurable greatness of His unconditional love for us.

The Father's love is immeasurable in breadth, length, height, and depth (Vs 18).

- His love is as wide as the world: "*For God so loved the world*" (John 3:16).
- The length of His love is as far as the farthest one of us has wandered: "*All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all*" (Isaiah 53:6).
- The depth of His love is as deep as the uttermost, the lowest hell that we have put ourselves in: "*He is able to save to the uttermost, those who come to Him*" (Hebrews 7:25).
- His love is as high as the heavens above: *He has "raised us up and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:6).
- His love is timeless, enduring, untiring: "*Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting*

love" (Jeremiah 31:3).

The Cross Of Jesus Christ—The Highest Expression Of God's Immeasurable Love

John 3:16-17
16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Romans 5:8
But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:9-10
9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.
10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The Bible points us to the Cross of Jesus Christ as the expression and demonstration of the Father's great love for us. Often, we look at temporary things to indicate or validate how much God loves us. If we do well in our academics or professional lives, we take this as a sign that God loves us. If we don't do well, then we take this to indicate that maybe God is angry or displeased with us in some way. However, the Bible teaches us that God manifested or expressed His love toward us by sending Jesus to die for us. So anytime we desire a sign or indication of the Father's love for us, we must look to Jesus and what He did for us on the Cross.

We were sinners. Our sins separated us from God. Our sins were taking us to hell—an eternity separated from God. We were in subjection to satan. The Lord Jesus died on the Cross, paid the full penalty of the sins of the entire human race, conquered sin, satan, hell, and the grave. He rose up triumphant and ascended back to the Father. He completed all that was needed to be done for every human person to be forgiven, set free from sin and satan, and to be brought into God's family. The work has been completed! This was a work of love that God Himself did for us. The Cross of Jesus Christ, points to the infinite width, the length, the depth, and the height—the immeasurable greatness of the Father's love for us. The one thing that remains is for each one to personally receive by faith what Christ has done and to live out of His finished work.

- God's love is so wide that it includes every person.
- God's love is so long it reaches to the farthest sinner.
- God's love is so deep it reaches down to the uttermost place.
- God's love is so high it lifts us to God Himself, to His own right hand.

The Cross Restores Our Capacity For Perfect Love

The Lord Jesus died on the Cross not only to demonstrate God's immeasurable love for us, but He died to make us whole.

Isaiah 53:5
But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

He paid the penalty for all our sins. He bore the suffering (punishment) to bring us peace. Peace in Hebrew is '*shalom*' which simply means wholeness and total well-being. By the wounds He bore we are healed of all sickness (Matthew 8:16-17).

He extends perfect love to us through the Cross. He also makes us whole so that we can receive God's perfect love and give away God's perfect love.

When we receive God's immeasurable love expressed through His Son, we are made whole. We realize the great love God has for us and for those around us. He restores our capacity to receive love and give love.

Because Of His Great Love There Is Abundant Mercy And Grace

Ephesians 2:1-7
1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Because of His great love with which He loved us, He is rich in mercy and grace. He raised us up to sit right next to Him.

We did not earn our place into God's love. We are brought into this because of His love, by His mercy and grace.

God's love is expressed through His mercy and grace. Because of His immeasurable love, God extends mercy and grace to us.

God's mercy is God's compassion, kindness, and goodness extended to us that overlooks

our past, our wrongs, our messes. Mercy holds back the judgment we deserve. God is rich in mercy. His mercy is richer than your deepest wrong! Sin is costly, but God's mercy is richer!

God's grace is what God gives or does. It is God's riches given to us. Grace gives us what we do not deserve and what we can never earn or attain by ourselves.

The Story Of The Prodigal Son—Mercy And Grace Extended

Luke 15:11-32
11Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.
12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.
13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.
14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.
15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.
17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,
19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."'
20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.
21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'
22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.
23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;
24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.
25 "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.
26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.
27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'
28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.
29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.
30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'
31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.
32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "

The father expressed his love for his son by extending MERCY and GRACE.

Mercy—the father forgave all the wrong the son had done—the wasting away of the fortune, bringing dishonor and disrepute to the family, degrading his own personal self, etc.

Grace—the father gave the son what he did not really deserve—a robe, a ring, shoes, an extravagant party, and the right to be an heir in the house!

If we only turn to Him, we will experience His immeasurable love firsthand! We will receive His abundant mercy and infinite grace.

What This Reveals To Us About His Immeasurable Love

- When we are in rebellion, He still loves us.
- When we are covered with filth and drowned in sin, He still loves us.
- When we are broken, wasted, and ruined, He still loves us.
- When we are at our worst, He still loves us.

Here is love, vast as the ocean! His love exceeds our deepest wickedness, our greatest wanderings, our faithless wonderings, our complete waywardness.

The Father loves us with an immeasurable, untiring love. The love of the Father is beyond measure, revealed to us in His Son Jesus Christ. Out of His immeasurable love, He pours out His mercy and grace upon us.

Romans 8:32
He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Prayer To Receive His Mercy And Grace And Become A Child Of God

God presents us with this wonderful opportunity to have all our sins forgiven and become His own children through faith in Jesus Christ. This is a decision each one of us must make personally. No one else can do this for us. We have to make a personal choice to believe in Jesus Christ and to follow Him and Him alone, the rest of our lives. Here is what the Bible says: "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name*" (John 1:12)

If you have never made a decision to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord and believe in Him to have your sins forgiven and become a child of God, then you can do so now.

You can use this sample prayer to make your decision. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for my sins on the Cross and demonstrating the Father's great love for me. I believe you paid for all my sins when you died for me on the Cross. I believe that you defeated satan, conquered hell and death and rose up on the third day. I believe you are alive today and are waiting to bring me into the family of God. Today, I receive you as my Savior and Lord. I believe in you. Make me a child of God and help me follow you the rest of my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HERE IS LOVE (WILLIAM REES, 1900)

Here is love, vast as the ocean,

Loving-kindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.

Who His love will not remember?

Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout heav'n's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And heav'n's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.

Let me, all Thy love accepting,
Love Thee, ever all my days;
Let me seek Thy kingdom only,
And my life be to Thy praise;
Thou alone shalt be my glory,
Nothing in the world I see;
Thou hast cleansed and sanctified me,
Thou Thyself hast set me free.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
By Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
And Thy grace my need is meeting,

As I trust in Thee, my Lord.
Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring
Thy great love and pow’r on me,
Without measure, full and boundless,
Drawing out my heart to Thee.

REFLECTION

1. Why would it be important for us as believers to be "deeply rooted" and "securely grounded" in the Father's immeasurable love for us?

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2. God's mercy and grace flow out of His immeasurable love for us. What do you understand by "mercy" and "grace"?

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3. Picture yourself immersed in God's ocean of love. Write down your thoughts. What does it mean to be loved unconditionally in such an immeasurable manner?

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4. Our Heavenly Father's True Picture

We need to have a correct picture, a true picture of God, as presented in the Word of God.

A wrong picture can cause us to take a wrong posture before God, that is, we relate to God in an incorrect way. For example, if we think that God is stingy, miserly, reluctant to bless, provide for, and prosper His people, we are unable to pray with confidence when asking for God's blessing or provision in our lives. Our prayers are filled with "ifs" and "maybes."

A wrong picture of our heavenly Father can leave us unsure about the will of God.

A wrong picture of our heavenly Father can leave us weak and fearful during life's challenges. We are unsure if God is happy with us or angry with us.

Some of us have grown up in homes where we have never really experienced parental love or the love of a father. We may even have had good parents, but never experienced the love of parents.

So, in this chapter we present some facets of God as our heavenly Father, in contrast to characteristics we may tend to ascribe to Him based on our personal experiences or preconceived notions. Our objective in this chapter is to gain a biblical perspective of our heavenly Father. These are not a complete description, but these are important and a much-needed set of descriptors that help paint a biblical picture of our heavenly Father.

An Unchanging Heavenly Father

God is an unchanging heavenly Father who can be relied on, depended on. This is in contrast to unpredictable parents about whom we are unsure as to how they may act or react.

James 1:17
Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Our heavenly Father is "consistent" in who He is, what He says, and what He does. We can count on Him and completely rely on Him.

An Unfailing Heavenly Father

God is an unfailing heavenly Father who never fails us. This is in contrast to parents who let us down or even absentee parents. Parents who are "there," but "not there" when we need them the most.

Hebrews 13:5
Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU."

God is a heavenly Father who is always there for us. God is too good to do us wrong, too wise to make a mistake, too strong to let us down.

A Bountiful And Generous Father

God is a heavenly Father who is bountiful and generous. This is in contrast to miserly, stingy parents, to whom we are afraid to ask for anything. God is a heavenly Father who meets our every need.

Matthew 6:31-32
31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

Matthew 7:7-11
7"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?
10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?
11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

God is infinitely better than earthly parents. He is aware of our needs and He gives good things to His children.

James 1:5
If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

God gives to all, He gives liberally, and He gives without finding fault, grumbling, or complaining.

Psalm 84:11
For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.

Knowing God as our bountiful, generous, heavenly Father, frees us to come boldly to the throne of grace to ask for help and provision in time of need, knowing He will grant to us what we ask.

A Merciful Father

God is our heavenly Father who is slow to anger and abounding in mercy. This is in contrast to parents who may be ill-tempered or short-tempered and get angry very easily.

We all make mistakes, but God is a merciful heavenly Father who forgives.

Psalm 103:8
The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

Lamentations 3:22-23
22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.
23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

God is a merciful heavenly Father who gives us another chance, yet again!

God our heavenly Father in His mercy also lovingly corrects and disciplines us. In all His disciplinary dealings with us, He is still compassionate and seeks our well-being.

We will discuss this in a forthcoming chapter.

A Redeeming Father

God our heavenly Father is a redeeming Father, who is redemptive in all He does. Even when all seems lost, He looks for ways to redeem—to recover, restore, rebuild, and lift up to greater glory. This is in contrast to parents who may give an ultimatum and bring an end to their relationship with us.

Isaiah 63:16
Doubtless You are our Father, Though Abraham was ignorant of us, And Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O LORD, are our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name.

For more on this see the free APC book "The Redemptive Heart of God."

An Accepting Father

God our heavenly Father is an accepting Father. He accepts us, He delights in us, and looks at us with eyes of love. This is in contrast to a parent who always looks down at us, thinks low of us, sees us unfit, unworthy, is always suspicious, and unaccepting of us.

Ephesians 1:4-6
4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,
5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Because we know we are so loved and accepted in His sight we enter into His presence with reverence, yet joyfully and freely, knowing we are always welcome there. He is a heavenly Father who enjoys us and wants us to enjoy Him.

We are accepted the way we are—and what He has made us to be in Christ. We do not have to "achieve" to be accepted or appreciated. We are accepted. All sense of rejection is gone!

A Father Of Abundant Grace

God is a heavenly Father, full of grace who lavishes on us even what we do not deserve, simply because He is favorable, and kind toward us. This is in contrast to a taskmaster parent for whom everything has to be rightfully earned and we only get what we deserve.

Taskmaster parents with high expectations can make us feel we are never good enough and leave us feeling like failures. We receive approval only if we surpass their expectations.

If we do not have this understanding of God's grace, we tend to relate to God based on our works—things we do for God, in ministry, at church, etc. The more we "do," the more we feel we are accepted of God. We seek for recognition and applause for everything we do and base our identity on this because we do not understand grace.

When we understand God as a Father of abundant grace, we are also gracious to others, because we value the grace of God extended to us.

Ephesians 2:7
that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:17
For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

An Empowering Father

God is our heavenly Father who empowers us. He looks at the best in us and enables us to be the best He designed us to be. He trusts us with His resources and His assignments for Kingdom work. This is in contrast to a parent who distrusts us, thinks we are incapable, unreliable, and will not amount to anything.

Our heavenly Father thinks good thoughts about us and has good plans for us (Jeremiah 29:11).

Luke 12:32
Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Colossians 1:12
giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

An Infinite Father

God is our heavenly Father who is beyond measure and who does beyond measure in us, through us, and for us. This is in contrast to earthly parents who are limited in what they can do, what they can provide, and who they can be to us.

- He never grows old (Psalm 102:26),
- He never grows tired or weary (Isaiah 40:28),
- He never runs out of wisdom (Isaiah 40:28).

Ephesians 3:20
Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

He is both "father" and "mother." So, if you'd like, you could say that there is the "mother heart" of the Father God, a heart that is caring, nurturing, and affectionate.

Isaiah 49:14-16
14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."
15"Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.
16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

Rejecting Self-Deceptions And Satan's Lies

The wrong picture we have painted about God is really self-deception. We deceive ourselves about who God is.
The devil also lies to us and wants us to hold a wrong picture of God.

Consider some of the opposing perceptions that some of us may have about God:

1. An unpredictable God instead of an unchanging heavenly Father.
2. An unreliable God instead of an unfailing heavenly Father.
3. A stingy God who needs to be somehow convinced into giving to us, instead of a bountiful and generous Father.
4. A God waiting to judge us with fire and brimstone, instead of a merciful Father.
5. A God who keeps account of every wrong we have done, holding our past against us instead of a redeeming Father.
6. A condemning God instead of an accepting Father.
7. A God who is hard to satisfy and requires everything to be earned, instead of a Father of abundant grace.
8. A God who does not want us to partner with Him, instead of an empowering Father.
9. A God who is limited in what He does for us, instead of an infinite Father.

Take some time to PRAY and DECLARE the truth over your own life, so that you can establish a true, biblical picture of our heavenly Father in your heart and mind.

Dear heavenly Father, I thank you for what your Word reveals to me about You and who You really are. Today, I reject all the wrong ideas, notions, and misconceptions I have held about You, and I receive the truth presented in your Word. I acknowledge and thank you that You are my unchanging heavenly Father, I can always trust and depend on you. I acknowledge and thank you that You are my unfailing heavenly Father, you will never abandon me, forsake me, or let me down. I acknowledge and thank You that You are my bountiful and generous Father, you will always provide generously, and you do not withhold any good thing from me. I acknowledge and thank You that You are my merciful Father, always kind and ready to forgive my sins, failures, and mistakes. I acknowledge and thank You that You are my redeeming Father, who always seeks to restore, rebuild, recover, and raise me up even when I mess up. I acknowledge and thank You that You are my accepting Father, always welcoming me into His presence and delighted that I am His. I acknowledge and thank You that You are my Father of abundant grace, giving me riches, blessings, and gifts that I do not deserve and what I cannot earn. I acknowledge and thank You that You are my empowering Father, always believing in me and enabling me to reach what you have in store for me. I acknowledge and thank You that You are my infinite Father, infinitely greater than any need I may have, infinitely more powerful, infinitely wiser than any situation I may face. I love you and trust in you. Thank you for the joy and privilege of being your child. In Jesus' name!

REFLECTION

1. Which of these aspects of our heavenly Father seem truly relevant to you today, and why?

(i) An unchanging heavenly Father

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(ii) An unfailing heavenly Father

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(iii) A bountiful and generous Father

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(iv) A merciful Father

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(v) A redeeming Father

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(vi) An accepting Father

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(vii) A Father of abundant grace

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(viii) An empowering Father

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(ix) An infinite Father

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2. How has your understanding, and therefore your relationship with your heavenly Father changed in view of these aspects that we have addressed?

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5. Receiving The Father's Love

The God-Kind Of Love

The Bible uses the Greek word '*agape*' to refer to the God-kind of love. 1 Corinthians 13 gives us a brief glimpse of this kind of love, which God has and which we are to walk in. Let's read this, with the perspective that this is a description of the love God has for us.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8
4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;
5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;
6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
8 Love never fails.

- God is love (1 John 4:8).
- God is patient and kind toward us.
- God is not rude toward us.
- God is not "selfish" but is really interested in us.
- God is not easily provoked.
- God does not think evil toward us.
- God does not rejoice in sin.
- God rejoices in truth—when we walk in truth.
- God bears (puts up) with all things.
- God "believes and hopes" (is inclined and persuaded to do) the best for us.
- God endures in His love for us. His love is enduring. This love never runs out, dries up, or comes to an end. This love lasts, and lasts, and lasts ... it is everlasting ... just as He said in Jeremiah 31:3 "*The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you*."
- God never fails. His love for us never fails or weakens.

This is how God loves us. We need to receive this, acknowledge this, and allow it to be settled deep in us, that we are loved by God in such a manner.

Let's reiterate a few insights and also present a few additional insights about the love that God has for us, and then discuss the importance of knowing, believing, receiving, and resting in this love.

Love That Is Unconditional

God's love is unconditional. It comes with "no strings attached." He simply invites us to receive His love and respond to that.

1 John 4:9-10
9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.
10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

It was not that we were going seeking after God. Rather, God came after us in His love. And out of His great love, He paid a great price to remove what hindered us from knowing Him, being in His family, and experiencing His goodness toward us. He paid the price entirely.

We are loved not because of our accomplishments, or our intelligence, or because of anything we have done. Now all we can do is receive and respond to His love.

1 John 4:19
We love Him because He first loved us.

Love That Is Uncommon

John 16:26-27
26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you;
27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.

The Lord Jesus informed His disciples that "in that day" referring to the time after His resurrection and ascension, that we would pray directly to the Father in His name. He said that we could do this and that He would not have to ask for us. The reason we can ask the Father directly in Jesus' name, is because the Father Himself loves us, because we love Jesus, and have believed in Jesus. When stating that the Father Himself loves us, it is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus used a different Greek word for "loves." He used the word '*phileo*' which talks about friendship and affection. In effect the Lord Jesus was saying, "The Father Himself is your Friend and is really affectionate toward you."

Say this: "*The Father Himself loves me. My heavenly Father is my Friend and is really affectionate toward me. I make my requests to Him confidently in the name of Jesus*."

John 17:23,26
23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

In verse 23, above, Jesus affirms that the Father loves us, the same way (in manner and measure) the Father loves Jesus.

Say this: "*The Father loves me, the same way He loves Jesus. I am loved by the Father; the same way Jesus is loved by the Father*."

The Father loves you the same way He loves Jesus.

In verse 26 above, the Lord Jesus prayed that we will have the Father's love in us—that we will feel, know, experience, and be overwhelmed by the Father's love in our hearts—the same love the Father has for His Son Jesus Christ.

Say this: "*I feel, know, experience, and am overwhelmed by the Father's love for me, which is the same love with which the Father loves Jesus*."

This kind of love is uncommon and impartial.

We would normally think that the One who is Perfect would be loved a whole lot more than those (us) who are imperfect. But to think that we, who are imperfect are loved by the Father, the same way that He loves the Perfect One, His Son is amazing.

There is no partiality with God (Romans 2:11). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). We know this. Yet often in the way we relate to God, we think that there are other believers who are more favored or more loved by God, than us. Think about this. God is not partial with His own Son—He does not love Him any more than He loves us. Then would He be partial to anyone else, to love them more than He would love us? God's love for us is impartial.

We are in the Beloved and are beloved of God.

Mark 1:11
Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Father referred to Jesus as His Beloved Son. The Apostle Paul lets us know that we too are "beloved of God" and are "accepted in the Beloved."

Romans 1:7
To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:6
to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Say this: "*I am in the Beloved and I am beloved of God. I am loved by God, as His beloved*."

The Lord Jesus prayed that the Father's love will be in our hearts for us to feel, know, and experience for ourselves in a personal way (John 17:26). This prayer was answered by God sending the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

Romans 5:5
Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us a personal experience of the Father's love. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the empowering to walk in the Father's love.

Love That Makes Us Unashamed

The Bible teaches us that "*... love covers all sins ...*" (Proverbs 10:12; 1 Peter 4:8).

Love covers. It clothes. It protects. Love removes nakedness and shame, and brings dignity, security, and honor.

This is what the love of God does for us.

Ephesians 1:4
Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Colossians 1:21-22
21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled
22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

We are holy, blameless (without blame), and above reproach in God's sight, because of His love for us!

Love That Is Unbreakable

Nothing can break, stop, hinder, or separate us from the Father's love. His love never gives up on us. There is perhaps no better way to describe this, than what we read here in Romans 8.

Romans 8:35-39
35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
36 As it is written: "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER."
37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,
39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

No matter what life throws our way, we cannot be separated from the Father's love. No force of man, no power of hell, no adversity, no calamity, no challenge, nothing can separate us from the Father's love for us, in Jesus Christ. His love for us is unbreakable. We can be assured and confident in every situation, in every circumstance, regardless of what we face, we are loved by the Father.

Love That Makes Us More Than Conquerors

Paul affirms that because of the Father's unbreakable love, in all these things—the worst of things—we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:37
Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

To be more than conquerors is to gain an overwhelming victory, gain a decisive victory, gain complete victory, to vanquish beyond, to gain more than a victory.

During the worst that can be brought against us, because of His love for us, we still gain an overwhelming victory, and we are complete victors! His love brings us out as complete winners. This is because all those things that come against us, are unsuccessful in separating us from the Father's love for us in Christ!

So even in the midst of the worst, we can walk with heads held up high, as winners, victors, as more than conquerors! We win every time, because of the Father's love for us.

Love That Unshackles (Liberates) Us

Fear has torment. One other place that has torment is hell. Living in fear, is like living in hell, in a place of torment.

Perfect love banishes all fear. It sets us free from fear. Perfect love comes from only One Source—God.

Experiencing perfect love liberates us.

1 John 4:17-18
17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.
18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1 John 4:17-18 (Amplified Bible)
17 In this [union and fellowship with Him], love is completed and perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment [with assurance and boldness to face Him]; because as He is, so are we in this world.
18 There is no fear in love [dread does not exist]. But perfect (complete, full-grown) love drives out fear, because fear involves [the expectation of divine] punishment, so the one who is afraid [of God's judgment] is not perfected in love [has not grown into a sufficient understanding of God's love].

Perfect love is love that is complete, full-grown. This has to do with us growing into a sufficient understanding of God's love for us.

For love to be perfected in us, we must grow into a personal, experiential understanding of the Father's great love for us. This is the very purpose of this entire study on the Father's love—to help us grow into a personal, experiential understanding of the Father's great love for us.

When this happens, we are unshackled. We are liberated from all fear, dread, and torment of God's judgment or punishment or condemnation!

Right here and now, when love is perfected in us, that is, as we come into a sufficient understanding of God's love, we are released from all fear, dread, and torment of God's judgment, punishment, and condemnation. We are completely free in how we relate to our heavenly Father. We have great reverential fear of Him and honor Him completely. But we are totally free from the morbid fear and dread of Him. We come to Him without any sense of fear of being condemned, judged, and rejected by Him.

As He (Jesus) is, so are we who live in this world (1 John 4:17).

- Our standing in the spiritual realm is the same as that of Jesus!
- Our standing before the Father is the same as that of Jesus!
- Our standing before the powers of darkness is the same as that of Jesus!

As He is, so are we. Hence, we are not dreadful or fearful before God's throne, nor of demons.

Experiencing the Father's love releases us from ...

- Every sense of guilt, shame, and condemnation. We are holy and without blame covered by His love (Ephesians 1:4).
- Feeling unloved or rejected. We are fully, completely, and totally accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6)
- The need to perform or earn His love. He loved us even before we knew Him (1 John 4:9-10).
- All sense of unworthiness and worthlessness. In His love, He has adopted us as His own sons and daughters (Ephesians 1:5).
- Feeling like a captive, enslaved, and trapped. You are free. He did not give us the spirit of slavery to be fearful like slaves (Romans 8:15).
- All sense of being controlled, manipulated, used. We are empowered by His love.
- All feelings of fear in our lives, fear about the future, fear about failure, fear about lack, and insufficiency. His perfect love drives out all fear (1 John 4:18).

Our unmet expectations are resolved in His love.

Our unexpected, unexplainable, perplexing experiences and events in life that once seemed to have shattered us now seem insignificant, and we arise as more than conquerors because of His love.

Even our own personal mistakes, bad choices, and poor decisions melt away in His love and we stand unashamed, knowing we are beloved and fully accepted in the Beloved!

When we receive His love, we are released from everything that weighs us down.

It is commonly said that each human being has three important areas of emotional need: **security, self-worth,** and **significance**. When we are perfected in love, we can firmly ground our 3S's: security, self-worth, and significance in the Father's love for us. Our security is in the Father's love for us. Nothing can separate us from His love. Our self-worth is in the Father's love for us. We are in the Beloved and we are beloved of God. Our significance is in the Father's love for us. Our standing in the spiritual realm is already taken care of—as He is, so are we in this world.

Know, Believe, Receive, And Rest In The Love That God Has For You

1 John 4:16
And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

John writes here that we have known and believed in the love that God has for us. God is love—we acknowledge Him and receive His love. We abide in the love of God. We must know, believe, receive, and abide in the Father's love for us.

Know

To know is to have knowledge of, to understand, to know absolutely, and to be sure of. We have attempted in what we have covered thus far to present to us the truth about the Father's love for us. We have read the Scriptures and we know the love the Father has for us.

Believe

Now we must believe. We must have faith in, entrust ourselves to, and commit to, put our trust in the Father's love. We believe the love that God has for us. We have read God's Word. His Word is truth. God's Word is not lying to us about God's great love for us. The Cross is not lying to us about God's great love for us. We believe the love the Father has for us.

Receive—Personally Experience

When we believe we can receive, that is, make it our own. We personally experience the Father's love for us. God is love. This is who He is. He loves us because He is love. We simply receive, to experience the Father's love. We simply let Him embrace us with His love.

You simply let Him love you, because He is love, because He is your Father ...

... not because you've been His best child.
... not because you've earned it.
... not because you've done so much for Him.
... but let Him love you because He just simply wants you to receive His love.

This is what Paul prayed, as we saw in an earlier chapter. We are to know by personal experience the immeasurable love God has for us, and then we must be deeply rooted and securely grounded in the Father's love.

Ephesians 3:17-19 (Amplified Bible)
17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith. And may you, having been [deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love,
18 be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God's people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love];
19 and [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God's presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself].

We find all our emotional needs met, a complete sense of acceptance when we receive a revelation of the Father's love.

Receiving the Father's love brings deep emotional healing and brings us into a place of emotional wholeness and well-being.

We also find our complete identity in this place of being His son or daughter.

Rest—Abide, Be Rooted, Be Securely Grounded, Quiet Yourself in His Love

1 John 4:16 (Message Bible)
We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God. God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us.

Once we have experienced His love, we must abide in the Father's love for us. To abide is to continue, remain, settle down, to take up permanent residence, to rest, be rooted, and securely grounded in the Father's love. This is different from occasionally visiting or even frequenting, coming in and out of the experience of the Father's love. We are to abide, to rest in the Father's love. And then we live out of that place of resting or abiding in His love.

When we are resting in the Father's love, we will not allow anything to disturb us. Nothing will shake us. Storms will come. Strong winds will blow. The waves may rise. Challenging situations and circumstances may come, but we are resting in His love. We are in that place that makes us more than conquerors because of His love.

When we are resting in His love, people may attack us. They may malign us, falsely accuse us, oppose us, and hinder us. But none of these shake us. We do not wish to retaliate or even defend ourselves. We have settled in His love. We respond with love. We do what love would do.

Zephaniah 3:17
The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

God quiets us with His love. Imagine a child that is crying. The parent lifts the child up in their arms, cuddles the child calming it down and soon the child is asleep peacefully. In a similar way God quiets us, calms us, stills us, and causes us to rest. He assures us of His unbreakable, unfailing, immeasurable love for us. The assurance of the Father's love, brought to us by the Spirit of God, sweeps over our souls. We are quieted with His love.

We must learn to rest in His love and live out of the love He has for us. In the next chapter, we will examine in greater detail what it means to abide in His love.

Prayer To Receive And Experience The Father's Love

Dear heavenly Father let the assurance of your great love for me fill my heart, and come on me, blanket, cover, and clothe me. Even now, give me a personal and tangible encounter with your great love for me. Holy Spirit please pour afresh the Father's love into my being. Let the love of God flood every part of my being, my heart, my mind, will, and emotions. Pour your love into the wounded areas of my soul and heal me. Make me whole.

Let all hurts, pains, and negative emotions be washed away. Let all guilt, shame, rejection, feelings of loneliness, of abandonment, of isolation be washed away by your love. Wash away all kinds of fears—fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of loving others, fear of letting others love me, fear of trusting people.

Let the Father's love dismantle and break my pride, my dependence on self, my emotional walls, and defenses that I may have raised up which keep me from experiencing your love.

Release me from my bondages—bondage to performance, to striving, attempting to earn love, and acceptance—and release me into a place of simply receiving your immeasurable, unlimited, unconditional, and unchangeable love.

Quiet me with your love. Bring me to a place of rest in your love. I receive my heavenly Father's embrace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECTION

1. Reflect on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 as a description of the God-kind of love, the love that God has for us. Write it down as a description of the Father's love for you personally.

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2. Reflect on John 17:23,26. The Father loves you the same way He loves Jesus and being beloved of God. What does this mean to you personally?

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3. Reflect on Romans 8:35-37. Why are we more than conquerors in all these things? How does this affect your perspective of life situations?

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4. Look at 1 John 4:17-18 from the Amplified Bible and discuss what it means to have His love perfected in us. How can we get to that place of having His love perfect in us? How would this affect us?

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6. Abiding In The Father's Love

Acknowledge The Father's Love—My Father Loves Me

It is wonderful to examine Jesus' relationship with His Father. The Lord Jesus often affirmed and acknowledged the Father's Love for Him. He also recognized and acknowledged what the Father was doing because of His love for Jesus.

John 3:35
The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

The Father had entrusted all things to Jesus' hand.

John 5:20
For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

The Father was revealing what He Himself was doing and would reveal even greater works to Jesus.

John 17:24
Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Jesus prayed and expressed His desire to the Father, knowing He was loved by the Father.

John 10:17
Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

In response Jesus walked in obedience to the Father to carry out the Father's will.

The Father loves us in the same manner and measure as He loves Jesus. The Father loves us, and He entrusts us with Kingdom assignments here on earth. The Father loves us, and He reveals things that He desires to do through us and will reveal greater things than what we have seen so far. The Father loves us and hears our prayers. We must acknowledge and affirm the Father's love for us, as Jesus did.

Abide In My Love

John 15:9-10
9 As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.
10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

The Lord Jesus invited us to abide in His love. He stated that He was also abiding in the Father's love. Jesus lived His earthly life abiding in the Father's love.

As we stated in the earlier chapter "to abide" is "to rest, dwell, settle in, remain, continue in." It implies being deeply rooted, firmly planted, and securely grounded. It is the place where we are quieted by His love.

"To abide" also means that we will "live out of, to draw life from, to live because of, to live through" what we abide in.

Consider this example:

John 6:56-57,63
56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.
57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.
63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

To "*eat My flesh and drink My blood*" is to "feed on Jesus". The one who feeds on Jesus abides in Jesus and therefore lives because of Him or lives his life out of Him. In talking about His flesh and blood, Jesus was referring to spiritual things—things of the life—giving Spirit and living Words He spoke.

So, to abide in the Father's love is to rest in His love and to live out of His love. We are to always abide in the Father's love which is to dwell in His love and to live out of His love.

Resting In And Living Out Of The Father's Love

2 Corinthians 13:14
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

One of Paul's pronouncements in his closing benediction is for the love of God to be with the believers. This means that the experience of the Father's love is not a momentary thing. It is an ongoing, present continuous, moment by moment experience of His love. We must live in an ongoing recognition and experience of the Father's love in everyday

life.

We live everyday knowing that we are loved by the Father in an immeasurable and unconditional way. Because the love of the Father is always with us, for us, and toward us, we can live like a beloved son or daughter. We live as those who are in the Beloved and who are beloved of God. We live out of our identity as His sons and daughters. We live out of a sense of sonship.

What does it mean to abide (rest) in the Father's love and to live out of a place of abiding in His love? What does this look like in practice? How would a person who is resting in the Father's love and living out of the Father's love behave and conduct himself (or herself) in daily life?

The Apostle John, referred to himself as the "*disciple whom Jesus loved*" (John 20:2; John 21:7,20). So, he personally received and experienced the love that the Lord had for him. John writes much about the love of God in his first epistle and explains the practical side of abiding in the love of God. We condense and summarize this here in five simple statements:

1. When we Abide in the Father's Love, There Is no Place for Hate.

1 John 2:9-11
9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.
10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.
11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

(See also 1 John 3:14-15; 1 John 4:20-21)

John repeats this several times in his epistle. When we abide in and live out of the Father's love, we are very diligent to keep hate out of our lives. We refuse hate toward anyone else taking residence in us. Hate is dangerous. If there is hate in our hearts toward another brother, even if we claim that we are walking in light, we are like those who are both blinded and walking in darkness. We do not know where we are going, we grope around trying to make progress, and instead we will stumble and fall.

We cannot prevent people from offending us, but we can refuse to take offense. Some things people say and do will inflict pain on us, but we can choose to let go and not carry the hurt around with us everywhere. Offense and hurt usually fester and turn to hate. Hate blinds us and leaves us in darkness. However, when we are abiding in and living out of the Father's love, offenses and hurt do not find place in us.

2. When We Abide in the Father's Love, Persecution Does not Alarm us and Purity Is Our Way of Life.

1 John 3:1-3,13
1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.
3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

John announced the overwhelming and extravagant love that God has for us in making us His own children. But then here are some things we must be ready for, being so loved by God: (A) The world will not recognize us and may hate us, and (B) We purify ourselves as He is pure.

When we are abiding in and living out of the Father's love, we are not alarmed that the world does not recognize us as children of God. We are not alarmed that the world may even hate and persecute us.

We have the wonderful hope that because we are His children, we know, that when the Lord is revealed, we will be made like Him. And because of this hope, we choose to purify our lives. So as people who are abiding in and living out of the Father's love for us, purity is a way of life. His love draws us into purity and to reject anything that is not pleasing to the Father.

3. When We Abide in the Father's Love, We Sacrifice and Share.

1 John 3:16-18
16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but indeed and in truth.

It is because Jesus laid His life down for us, it is through this and in this that we understand, experience, and know the Father's love for us. This then moves us to do the same for others. We lay our lives down for others. We sacrifice for others' benefit. This translates into practical ways, in "deed and truth," by us giving and sharing to meet the material needs of others.

The Apostle Paul, sharing about his own ministry captured it in these words:

2 Corinthians 5:14-15
14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;
15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

We are moved, inspired, motivated, and compelled into action by the love of God. We look at life through the example of Jesus Christ. He gave it up for us. So we also no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus.

John 15:12-13
12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Love's greatest expression involves laying down one's life. Jesus demonstrated this. He gave His own life upon the Cross. In practice, while some of us may actually face death in laying down our lives, for many of us this may involve giving up or sacrificing what is our own possessions, opportunities, privileges, etc., in order to benefit another.

4. When We Abide in the Father's Love, We Walk in Love.

1 John 4:7-12
7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.
10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

Because we have so experienced the Father's love, we cannot help but overflow in love for other people. A great description of what it means to walk in love is given to us in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails*." We choose to relate to people with the love of God.

We are empowered by the Father's love, to walk in His love. When we love one another, His love is perfected—made complete, brought to its full purpose—in us. When we walk in love, then His love is accomplishing, completing, and fulfilling its intended purpose in us and through us. This is God Himself dwelling and living through us!

5. When We Abide in the Father's Love, We Recognize Our Spiritual Standing, We Are Free from Fear and Free to Love Him.

1 John 4:17-19
17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.
18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.
19 We love Him because He first loved us.

When the love of God has been perfected in us, that is, we are in the place where we have received His love and are allowing it to do its full work in us (A) We have boldness before God and are not living in a morbid, tormenting fear of judgment (B) We recognize who we are in the spiritual realm—as Jesus is, so are we—and that is how we live in this world (C) We overflow with love for Him because of His love for us.

To summarize, when we rest in and live out of the Father's love:

1. Hate toward others has no place in us
2. Persecution does not alarm us
3. Purity is our way of life
4. We sacrifice and share with others
5. We walk in the God-kind of love
6. We recognize our spiritual standing—as Jesus is so are we—and we live out of this, in the world
7. We are free from fear of condemnation and judgment before God
8. We overflow with love for Him because He first loved us

Let us acknowledge and affirm this:

I abide in the Father's love for me. I rest in and live out of the Father's love. Hate has no place in my heart. I am not alarmed if the world does not recognize me or even persecutes me. Purity is my way of life. I purify myself even as He is pure. I sacrifice, give generously, and share what God has blessed me with. I walk in love toward people. I know who God has made me to be, in Him, because of His love. As Jesus is, so am I—an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. I am free from all guilt, shame, and condemnation. I am free to love my heavenly Father. I love Him because He first loved me.

Obedience, The Key To Abiding In The Father's Love

Jesus walked in obedience to the Father...

John 8:29
And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.

John 14:31
But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

John 15:9-10
9 As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.
10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

... And so, must we.

John 14:15,21,23-24
15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.
21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."
23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.
24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

John 15:9-10
9 As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.
10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

1 John 2:5-6
5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.
6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

We observe from all these Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Himself practiced and taught that to abide in the Father's love, we must walk in obedience to His Word and keep His Word. As we do so, the love of God, the Father's love is perfected in us. Obedience to God is important to rest in and live out of the Father's love.

When we abide in the Father's love, we keep His Word and walk as Jesus walked.

Obedience to the Father is us walking in the light, as He is in the light, and thus fellowship (intimate friendship) with Him is possible. It is this fellowship that enables us to abide in (rest in and live out of) His love on a day-to-day basis.

1 John 1:6-7
6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Obedience does not earn the Father's love. He loves us immeasurably and unconditionally.

Obedience is what you do because you love Him. You do it out of love.

Obedience keeps us in intimate fellowship with Him, thus enabling us to abide in, rest in, draw life from, and live out of the Father's love.

REFLECTION

1. Why is it important to acknowledge and affirm our heavenly Father's love for us?

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2. We mentioned eight outcomes when we abide in and live out of the Father's love for us:

(i) Hate toward others has no place in us
(ii) Persecution does not alarm us
(iii) Purity is our way of life
(iv) We sacrifice and share with others
(v) We walk in love
(vi) We recognize our spiritual standing —as Jesus is, so are we—and we live out of this in the world
(vii) We are free from fear of condemnation and judgment before God
(viii) We overflow with love for Him because He first loved us

How are you doing in each of the above eight areas? (Take some time to pray and affirm before God that you can do each of these because of the Father's love.)

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3. How is walking in obedience connected to abiding in the Father's love?

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7. Love That Disciplines

An important aspect of abiding in the Father's love has to do with His loving discipline and correction. When we understand why the Father disciplines us and His heart when He disciplines us, we will be able to respond correctly. God's loving correction is not something to be afraid of or to run away from. Our Father's loving correction is something to be welcomed because it is for our benefit.

Whom The Father Loves, He Disciplines

Hebrews 12:4-13
4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.
5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR BE DISCOURAGED WHEN YOU ARE REBUKED BY HIM;
6 FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."
7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?
8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.
9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?
10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.
11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,
13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

The words "chastening," "rebuked," and "scourges" sound hard and rude. The Greek word translated "chastens" is '*paideuo*' which means "to train up a child, to educate, instruct, learn, teach, and discipline" as part of this process. The same word for "chastening" (Greek '*paideia*') is used in Ephesians 6:4 for fathers bringing their children in the "nurture" of the Lord. The Greek word for "rebuked" is '*elengcho*' and means "to convict, convince, reprove, tell a fault" and is the same word used in John 16:8 about the Holy Spirit that He would convict or reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Greek word for "scourge" is '*mastigoo*' which means to whip, flog, beat. Keep in mind that these words are used in the context of a father disciplining his children and hence has to be interpreted in that context. So the chastening of the Lord has to do with (A) *Paideuo*—the Father's loving instruction, nurture, education, and training of His children and (B) *Elengcho*—the Father lovingly telling His children what is wrong and pointing them to what is right, and (C) *Mastigoo*—the Father's loving disciplining of

children to bring them into a place of obedience. As we see readily, even from our natural context with children, instruction, education, nurturing, and training is what is done normally. The beating (training with punishment) is used only IF the normal process is not being received or is being violated.

Loving instruction and correction are normal to a Father–child relationship (Vs 7). This is God our heavenly Father treating us as His sons and daughters. His correction and discipline are an expression of His love for us.

Our heavenly Father corrects and disciplines us because of His love for us and for our good. He does this for our profit or benefit (Vs 10). He does it to take us from where we are to a higher place, to where He would like us to be.

When God corrects us He does not do so to destroy, demean, devalue, or demote us. His loving correction always comes to lift us up and help us be the kind of people we were meant to be. His correction comes with dignity, acceptance, and in grace.

This aspect of the Father's love may be temporarily painful (Vs 11).

Correction becomes necessary when we step out of the place of obedience—literally, when we step out of that place of resting in and living out of His love.

Correction is God aligning us to His Word, His will, and His ways. He is bringing us back into that place of abiding in His love. He is drawing us back into that place of resting in and living out of His love.

The right response to correction is obedience by yielding and surrender to our heavenly Father (Vs 9). This is when we learn to say, "*not my will, but your will be done*."

God corrects us through His Word, through His Spirit, through other people, and sometimes through situations, circumstances. God speaks to us through His Word bringing instruction, training, and correction (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Spirit of God leads and guides us into all truth, which also implies He keeps us from error and corrects us (John 16:13). God also speaks His counsel into our hearts through other people, especially godly people who are placed in our lives to influence us. We must be open to receive God's nurture, instruction, and correction through all these three channels. There are times God will lovingly discipline us through situations He orchestrates for us. (**Note**: We say "sometimes" through situations and circumstances because, there are some situations that the enemy, the devil, throws against us which we need to dominate and overcome. Then, there are some situations that are the result of our own actions which we need to take responsibility for and make changes as required.)

Our response to His loving discipline will determine our progress to the next level of

growth, maturity, and holiness. This is important for abiding in His love and progressing to fulfilling our life assignment.

One of the best things we can do daily is to look up to God and ask Him to align us to Himself—If there is anything that has gone out of alignment to obedience.

You can be your own watchman. Watch over your own heart, your own thoughts, and your own actions. Abide in His love. Remember His empowering grace and the strengthening fellowship of His Holy Spirit is always with you to enable you to abide in His love (2 Corinthians 13:14). The instant we see ourselves going out of the place of obedience, stepping even an inch out of abiding in the Father's love, we need to check ourselves, and draw back into that place of abiding in His love.

In life, there will be times we have to deal with things with rigor and discipline. For instance as parents, or as a teacher in a classroom, as a professional handling employees, etc. there will be times we have to confront, correct, reprove, and demand that which is required or expected to be done. We handle even these difficult things both with the sternness of a responsible leader and still be governed by the Father's love. The Spirit of God will enable us to handle such difficult situations with the unconditional love of God while enforcing correction and discipline. This is also an expression of the Father's love.

Misconceptions About The Father's Loving Discipline

Often people have strange misconceptions on what the Father's loving correction is. They incorrectly attribute sickness, calamity, accidents, failures, tragedies, poverty, etc., to the Father's loving discipline, instruction, or correction. Even earthly parents, as flawed as we are, would not do this to our children. Which earthly parent, desiring to teach, instruct, or nurture their child would put them through an ordeal with sickness, accident, tragedy, etc., just so that they can mature, develop character, or grow up? NONE! Then how inconsistent and illogical we are in our spiritual understanding, to attribute such things (sickness, calamity, accidents, failures, tragedies, poverty, etc.) to an infinitely loving heavenly Father, as though these were expressions of His loving discipline in our lives! The Lord Jesus was very clear that our heavenly Father was infinitely better than earthly parents: "*Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him*!" (Matthew 7:9-11).

There is a vast difference between the loving discipline of our heavenly Father and the judgment of God for rebellion and unrepentant, willful sinning. Through the course of our lives as believers, we normally walk in obedience to the Father and do not come into the place where we are deserving of the judgment of God. Even if we sin, we know how to get things right with God immediately. As we walk in obedience to God, there is an

adversary, satan, and his demons who come against us with their wiles and schemes. We must recognize the work of the enemy for what it is and using our place of authority in Christ, resist, overcome, and walk in continuous victory over such things. We must not attribute the wicked works of the enemy—the stealing, killing, and destroying, the sickness, calamity, accidents, failures, tragedies, poverty, etc., to God.

REFLECTION

1. Why would a loving heavenly Father discipline His children?

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2. Summarize what the chastening, rebuking, and scourging referred to in Hebrews 12:5-6 mean, in the context of a father dealing with his children.

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3. What are the four ways in which God administers His loving correction into our lives? Consider how you can sensitize yourself to these, so that you recognize and respond quickly to God's loving correction in your life.

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8. Imitating Our Heavenly Father

Experiencing the Father's love not only restores our capacity to be loved, but also restores our capacity to love. We can walk in love, in a manner that is way beyond our own capacity.

His Love In Us And Through Us

Ephesians 5:1-2
1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.
2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

We are to imitate our heavenly Father. The first aspect we are called to imitate is walking in love. The standard is Christ and His example of love and sacrifice. Do what Jesus did. He demonstrated for us what it is to walk in love.

God will not instruct us to do something that is not possible (attainable). Neither will He instruct us to do something that He will not empower us to do. So, His instruction to imitate Him and to walk in love as Christ did is possible as we receive His empowering to do so.

When we imitate our heavenly Father and walk in love as Christ did, this is a sacrifice that pleases our Father, a sweet-smelling aroma, the same way the Father was pleased with Jesus' sacrifice.

Walking In Love Is Walking The More Excellent Path

1 Corinthians 12:31
But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13
1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.
4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;
5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;
6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.
9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.
10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.
11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.
13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 14:1
Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

After the Apostle Paul explains to us about the gifts of the Spirit and membership functions (leading, teaching, administration, etc.) in the Body in 1 Corinthians 12, he encourages us to desire these gifts, but states that he would like to point us to "*a more excellent way*" or a way that is even better or far superior. The implication here is that there is an even better way to minister to people and serve the Body of Christ—a way that is better than the gifts of the Spirit and exercising membership functions. He points us to walking in the God-kind of love.

Paul explains in the first part of 1 Corinthians 13 that if we exercise the gifts of the Spirit, membership functions, and do great charitable deeds even to the point of offering our body to be burned, without being motivated and guided by the God-kind of love—all this is empty, is nothing, and has no benefit! This shows the importance of abiding in love when serving and ministering.

Whatever we do must be governed, guided, and motivated by the God-kind of love. Do it resting in and living out of the Father's love. As Paul explains in verses 4-8, if we are impatient, unkind, jealous, boastful, proud, behaving rudely, self-seeking, self-promoting, self-centered, irritable, angered, have evil or intent, promoting iniquity or untruth, then we are not being governed, guided, and motivated by love. The exercise of the gifts of the Spirit with improper motivation means nothing, is empty and brings no benefit.

The reason love is superior to the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, ministry functions, charitable deeds, and to faith and hope is because love is enduring. There will come a time when the only thing that will still be in operation is love. All the others will be reduced to inactivity, no longer in use.

This is not to say that we should not exercise the gifts of the Spirit or our membership functions. Having got our priority right to walk in love, we pursue the exercising of the gifts of the Spirit and membership functions as Paul sums things up in 1 Corinthians 14:1.

Remember, faith works through love (Galatians 5:6). [**Note**: in verse 8, in the context of prophecies ("*prophecies, they will fail*") and knowledge ("*knowledge, it will vanish away*") the same Greek work '*katargeoo*' is translated "they will fail" and "it will vanish away." The meaning is that these gifts will no longer be in use, reduced to inactivity.]

Love Never Fails

1 Corinthians 13:8
Love never fails.

The Greek word translated "fails," used in relation to love, is '*ekpipto,*' which according to Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary means to "*be driven out of one's course; figuratively to lose, become inefficient*" and according to Thayer's Greek Definitions includes "*to fall from a place from which one cannot keep, to fall from a position, to fall powerless, to fall to the ground, be without effect.*"

If we put all this together, we get the understanding that when we walk in love, we will not get off course. Walking in love is staying on the right course, the right path. Also, when we walk in love, we will not fall powerless, we will not be brought to dishonor, or will we become useless. Instead we will have effect and impact.

So, let us understand that when we walk in love, we are taking a path on which we will not fail. Whatever you do motivated, guided, and governed by the God-kind of love, will have its impact.

Resting in and living out of the Father's love will keep you on the right course, always.

Receiving His Love Expands Our Capacity To Love

Romans 5:3-5
3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The Apostle Paul is writing about our present life as believers even as we go through difficulties. We do so knowing that these develop our perseverance (endurance) and in turn our character and this strengthens our hope, our expectation, or anticipation, of what is to come.

Now the expectation or hope we have does not disappoint us. Literally it means that this hope does not leave us ashamed or we are not ashamed of the hope we have, because right here and now we are experiencing the love of God, the Father's

immeasurable and unconditional love. This love is poured into our hearts in a gushing, overflowing manner by the Holy Spirit.

This love—the Father's love—is abounding and overflowing in our hearts, both for us to experience and enjoy and for us to give away.

Because of the Father's love abounding in our hearts, we are joyful in tribulation and shameless in our hope.

Because of the Father's love overflowing in our hearts, our capacity to love others with this love, now explodes. We are now empowered by the Holy Spirit to love others as He loves. We can love as God loves! We do what love would do. We stop judging (in a negative way), criticizing, and condemning people. We speak the truth, correct, and guide in love. We are hopeful, believing, and uplifting of people even in difficult circumstances.

Imagine this love carrying over into husband–wife relationships. In fact, we are instructed in God's Word to do so. Love as Christ loved. Love with the Father's love.

Ephesians 5:25
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

Our marriages and homes will be an oasis of love in a hurting world. The husband, wife and children would look forward to being at home, to being together because of the overflow of the Father's love. The home would be a place of refuge, comfort, strength, and healing.

Loving As God Loves, Reveals God

1 John 4:12
No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

No one has seen God at any time. When we love one another, God dwells in and is seen through us. When we love others with His love, God is revealed through us. Loving as God loves puts God on display. It brings a measure of the revelation of God through a tangible expression of the Father's love.

Malachi 4:5-6
5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

One of the moves of God prior to the day of the Lord, is the turning of the hearts of the

Fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. This is so important, that if it fails to happen, the earth will be struck with a curse. Let's consider this in the context of the natural family as well as the local church family. For many their first opportunity to have a glimpse of the unconditional, nurturing, affectionate love of God our heavenly Father is from their own parents. And when this is broken, they are not sure where else they would find that kind of love. As parents, sometimes we either misrepresent the heavenly Father's love or give no indication of His love to our children. For some of us dads (fathers) we incorrectly think that showing affection or emotion is a sign of weakness and is not being "a man." This is not true!

Our family needs to see a revelation of the Father's love, His tenderness, His gentleness, His goodness, His mercy, His patience, His kindness, in us fathers. Because of what they see in us, they should be drawn deeper into their love of God our heavenly Father.

This is true about the church family as well. When the unsaved, the wayward, the prodigals see the Father's love in the "fathers" (and "mothers") in the church community, they will come home. The local church must be a place where the broken, lost, and hurting are welcome, and where they will be nurtured through the Father's love into a place of wholeness.

Loving As God Loves Expands Our Revelation Of His Love

1 John 4:12
No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

When we love others with His love, then His love is perfected, completed, reaches its fullness, and fulfills its intended purpose in us. We grow into a greater understanding of the Father's love for us and can let His love do its intended work in us.

One of the best ways to grow in our understanding and revelation of the Father's love is to love as He loves. When we choose to love as God loves, when we do this practically, even in difficult situations, our personal revelation of His love keeps growing. As our capacity to love others expands, we begin to understand increasingly the greatness of His love for us. The more we let God expand our love for others, our revelation of His love for us increases. As we pour out His love, we experience a greater pouring in of His love. A greater revelation of His love becomes ours.

Walking In Love, Is Walking In Union With God

1 John 4:16
And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

1 John 4:16 (Good News Bible)
And we ourselves know and believe the love which God has for us. God is love, and those who live in love live in union with God and God lives in union with them.

When we dwell and live out of the Father's love, we abide in God and God in us. When we abide in the Father's love, we move in union with God. We are moving in God and through God, and God is moving in and through us. This truth is so powerful. When we rest and live out of the Father's love, we move in union with God. When we move in love, God moves with us. When we act in love God acts with us. In love, when we touch, God touches. In love, when we speak, God speaks. When we walk in the God-kind of love, we walk in union with God, and hence we are undefeatable. There is nothing that the enemy can do to stop us, pull us down, or push us back.

Let us make this our way of life. Let us rest in, live, and operate out of the Father's love. When we do so, we are moving in God and God is moving in and through us.

REFLECTION

1. Write down some changes you will ask the Lord to help you make, so that you can imitate our heavenly Father to love as He loves.

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2. We have considered several insights on walking in love:

   - Walking in love is walking the more excellent path
   - Love never fails
   - Receiving his love expands our capacity to love
   - Loving as God loves, reveals God
   - Loving as God loves expands our revelation of his love
   - Walking in love, is walking in union with God

   Personalize each of these statements and write a sentence or two, applying each to your own personal life situation:

a. Because, walking in love is walking the more excellent path, I

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b. Because love never fails, I know I can...

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c. Because receiving His love expands my capacity to love, I know I can...

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d. Because loving as God loves, reveals God, I will...

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e. Because loving as God loves expands my revelation of His love, I will...

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f. Because walking in love, is walking in union with God, I will...

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Partner with All Peoples Church

All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out all across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people, and Christian Leaders conferences are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of books are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

We invite you to partner with us financially by sending either a one-time gift or a monthly financial gift. Any amount that you can send to help us in this work across our nation will be greatly appreciated.

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ATTEND A WEEKEND SCHOOL

Weekend Schools, held in Bangalore, are geared to train, and equip believers in specific areas of life and ministry. These are conveniently held on a Saturday 9am-6pm. Weekend schools are open to all believers from all churches and across denominations, who are interested in being trained and equipped. Below is a list of weekend schools that are currently being hosted.

Weekend School of Prophetic Ministry
Weekend School of Healing and Deliverance
Weekend School on Gifts of the Spirit
Weekend School of Prayer and Intercession
Weekend School on Inner Wholeness
Weekend School on Lifestyle Evangelism
Weekend School on God@Work
Weekend School of Urban Missions and Church Planting
Weekend School on Christian Apologetics

Please visit: **apcwo.org/weekendschool** for current schedule and to register online

HOST A CHRISTIAN LEADERS CONFERENCE

All Peoples Church provides Spirit anointed equipping and impartation for pastors, local church leadership, leaders of Christian organizations and others engaging in Christian ministry. In addition to anointed teaching, Spirit-led ministry and impartation, our teams engage in personal interaction and discussions with participants. Each Christian Leaders Conference runs typically for 2 to 3 days focused on a specific theme. Participants will leave renewed, empowered, and equipped for greater impact and effectiveness in their ministry. Christian Leaders Conferences are typically hosted by a local church, a Christian ministry, a missions organization or denominational head-office for churches and pastors in its area or within its network or denomination. The hosting organization will cover the expenses of the conference as well as inviting participants. All Peoples Church will send its ministry team to serve the participants at the Christian Leaders Conference.

Some of the themes that our teams commonly minister on:

- **Revivals, Visitations and Moves of God**
- **Presence and Glory**
- **Kingdom Builders** (The Kingdom of God and Kingdom Building)
- **Level Ground**
- **The House of God**
- **Apostolic and Prophetic Ministry**
- **Ministering Healing and Deliverance**
- **Gifts of the Spirit**
- **Marriage and Family**
- **Equipping the Saints and Marketplace Transformation**

For additional details and a current listing of themes for Christian Leaders Conference, please visit: **apcwo.org/CLC**

To schedule and plan a Christian Leaders Conference please email us at:
contact@apcwo.org

About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology, and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at **www.apcwo.org/locations** or send an email to **contact@apcwo.org**.

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy, and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But, the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, *"***For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).** Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

"… through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

… "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

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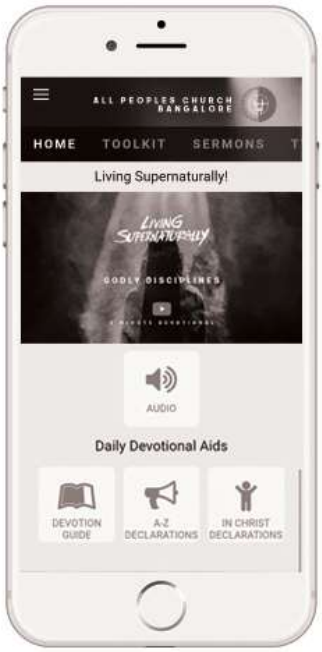

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All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center (APC-BC), in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God, and powerful demonstrations of signs, wonders and miracles—all flowing out of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

At APC-BC in addition to sound teaching we emphasize the love of God in demonstration, the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural work of God. Several young men and women have been trained and sent out to fulfill God's call over their lives.

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The Bible unveils many facets of God. Of these, one of the most powerful revelations of God is that of a Father. God is our heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus taught us to call God "Our Father." The Bible reveals the Father's love for us. This book is a study on the Father's love. Our understanding of God's love for us affects how we love God, how we love ourselves and how we love others.

God, our Father in heaven, loves us unconditionally and immeasurably. The greatest expression and demonstration of the Father's love for us is the Cross of Jesus Christ. When we know, believe, receive and rest in the Father's love for us, everything changes. We are healed, made whole and set free from all our brokenness and bondages. When we live out of the Father's love we love as we are loved. We love God freely. We love others freely. We live as more than conquerors, those who have more than vanquished all of life's challenges and the evil powers of darkness, through the unbreakable love of God. This book is for YOU!

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